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Jacksonville District

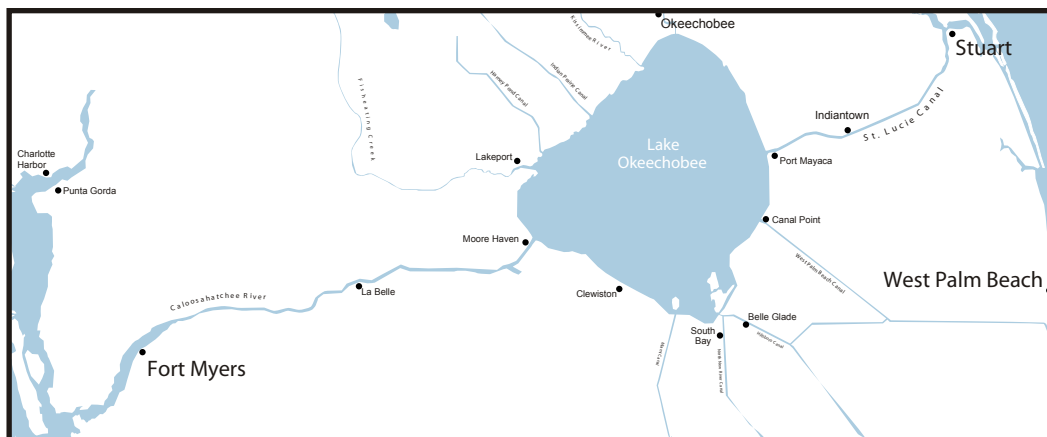
# Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule Study

September 2006

## Overview

**T**he U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Jacksonville District manages Lake Okeechobee in close coordination with the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD). The Corps manages lake levels through water management structures and canals that lead to the Caloosahatchee estuary to the west and the St. Lucie estuary to the east. A series of major canals and structures also release water south from the lake to water conservation areas, Everglades National Park and for water supply. Current Stormwater Treatment Area constraints prevent increased releases south. The overriding concern that leads to periodic releases of freshwater to the estuaries is the stability of the Herbert Hoover Dike at high lake elevations and public safety.

Lake Okeechobee water management actions are guided by a regulation schedule referred to as the Water Supply and Environment (WSE) schedule. Because the WSE is based on actions that would be taken in relatively drier years, and as we have entered a period of higher rainfall, water managers agreed that the WSE regulation schedule can be improved. The resulting Lake Okeechobee Regulation Schedule Study (LORSS) includes a two-part approach for developing improved water management guidelines for Lake Okeechobee:



Lake Okeechobee Waterways

**Short-term:** The Jacksonville District initiated a fast-track study for revising the current WSE, based on operational changes only, without the benefit of any new construction. The document to revise the regulation schedule, a draft Water Control Plan (WCP), will be supported by a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS). Work on the draft WCP and SEIS began in fall 2005. The revised regulation schedule is planned for implementation for a three-year period beginning January 2007.

**Long-term:** In early 2007, when a new Lake Okeechobee regulation schedule is implemented, water managers will immediately begin to develop a new regulation schedule that will take into account construction of early Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP) projects, including Acceler8 project components. The components will provide many additional options for water storage and management. Acceler8 is a state initiative being implemented by the SFWMD for the purpose of expediting construction of eight CERP project components. The new regulation schedule is currently planned for early 2010 implementation. As CERP features come on line, the system operation manual will be modified.

# In the Final Analysis

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers considers public safety our highest priority. The Corps must maintain a regulation schedule that does not compromise health and safety. The study process itself provided us with a significant improvement in our understanding of the total system. We cannot afford to wait until projects now in the planning stages are constructed. The system requires immediate action and we have taken up the challenge and succeeded in developing a better way to manage Lake Okeechobee water.

Water managers fine-tuned 22 alternative schedules, and conducted a final evaluation of five. The Corps' tentatively selected plan (TSP) was chosen based on the improved and overall balanced performance it provides for lower lake management, improvements in the preferred estuary discharge performance, maintenance of Greater Everglades water deliveries and minimization of negative impacts to water supply and commercial navigation.

The TSP meets the public health and safety constraint for the Herbert Hoover Dike. It improves the overall environmental health of the lake and estuary discharge performance. It meets Greater Everglades water requirements and limits impacts to water supply and commercial navigation. The TSP recommendation took into consideration input received from members of the LORSS project delivery team, including stakeholders, regulatory agencies, elected officials, as well as comments received from interested citizens.



## We Want to Hear from You

Public comments on the final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement and Water Control Plan are being received at regional public meetings for a 30-day period between October 20 through November 20. Submit comments by e-mail through Yvonne L. Haberer at [LORSSComments@saj02.usace.army.mil](mailto:LORSSComments@saj02.usace.army.mil).



To submit a written comment or for further information:



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